(62) Which grain of food needs liberation?

Shri Maharaj asked the visitors one morning: "Some of you have been coming here for several days. I am particularly sensible of the fact that the overseas visitors, who have come here not as tourists but with the specific intention of listening to my talks, have to spend substantial money to live in Bombay. I feel rather concerned whether they really understand what I am trying to convey. Now, tell me. You know what Paramarth is: the ultimate meaning (of life). What IS the ultimate meaning? - as far as each of you is concerned? Think well of what I have been talking about before you answer."

One bold answer came: "Liberation - I want to be liberated from the bondage of this life; I would now call it the bondage of consciousness. Soon there were confirmatory murmurs from several others.

Shri Maharaj laughed and said: "How strong the conditioning can be is again seen; whether the conditioning is from by the parents or from the spiritual guides is not too relevant. This matter of bondage and the liberation therefrom is the traditional aspect which is given to those whose intellectual and intuitive level is not high enough to grasp at the true essence of THAT-WHICH-IS. But you are not kindergarten students of spirituality. I keep telling you that you must cease to think and speak as if you are centred in a phenomenal object, that you are not the phenomenal object but consciousness itself which provides sentience to the sentient being, indeed that you are consciousness only in manifestation and that, truly, but truly, you are that which is prior to consciousness manifesting itself i.e. pure AWARENESS.

Is it not a simple fact to understand, Shri Maharaj asks, that a mere object, an appearance - which is all that a physical body is - cannot possibly perform any action whatsoever as an independent entity? It is

only when the universal consciousness, in its total functioning, manifests itself by objectifying itself and at once becomes identified with the object, that the concept of an individual I comes into being. This is the source of 'bondage': the objectivising of "I" (pure subjectivity) into an objective 'me'. It is this 'me', the I-concept or Ego, which is the imaginary bondage from which liberation is sought. A clear apperception of what constitutes the sentient being who is seeking liberation will show how ludicrous the whole concept is. The body itself is nothing but the growth of the male sperm which gets fertilised in the mother's womb; the fertilised male sperm is the essence of the food consumed by the parents and in it consciousness as has always been latent. If it is now clear that what we appear to be is nothing but the essence of food, asks Shri Maharaj, which grain of food are you wanting to liberate? Which particular grain of food – or which of the five fractions of the five elements (the food being the essence of the five elements) – are you identifying yourself with?!

Awakening or enlightenment or liberation is nothing, absolutely nothing, other than just profoundly, deeply, intuitively to apperceive that what we are – THAT-WHICH-IS-HERE-NOW – is the absolute absence of whatever is imaginable or cognisable, which is the same as the absolute presence of the unknowable potentiality.

Just think for a moment, says Shri Maharaj. Is there any question that arises which does not have at its centre a "you" (or a 'me' so far as anyone is concerned) seeing or not-seeing, understanding or not-understanding, doing or not-doing? Hardly ever is it the thing seen or the matter understood or the act that happens. And yet, whenever there is Para-vritti – a complete turnabout – total changeover – "metanoesis", the changeover has "happened". The changeover has not been "done" or "achieved" by any entity of its own volition. It is this fact that is not realised.